

DUMPING KOHL • HEDGE FUND FIASCOS

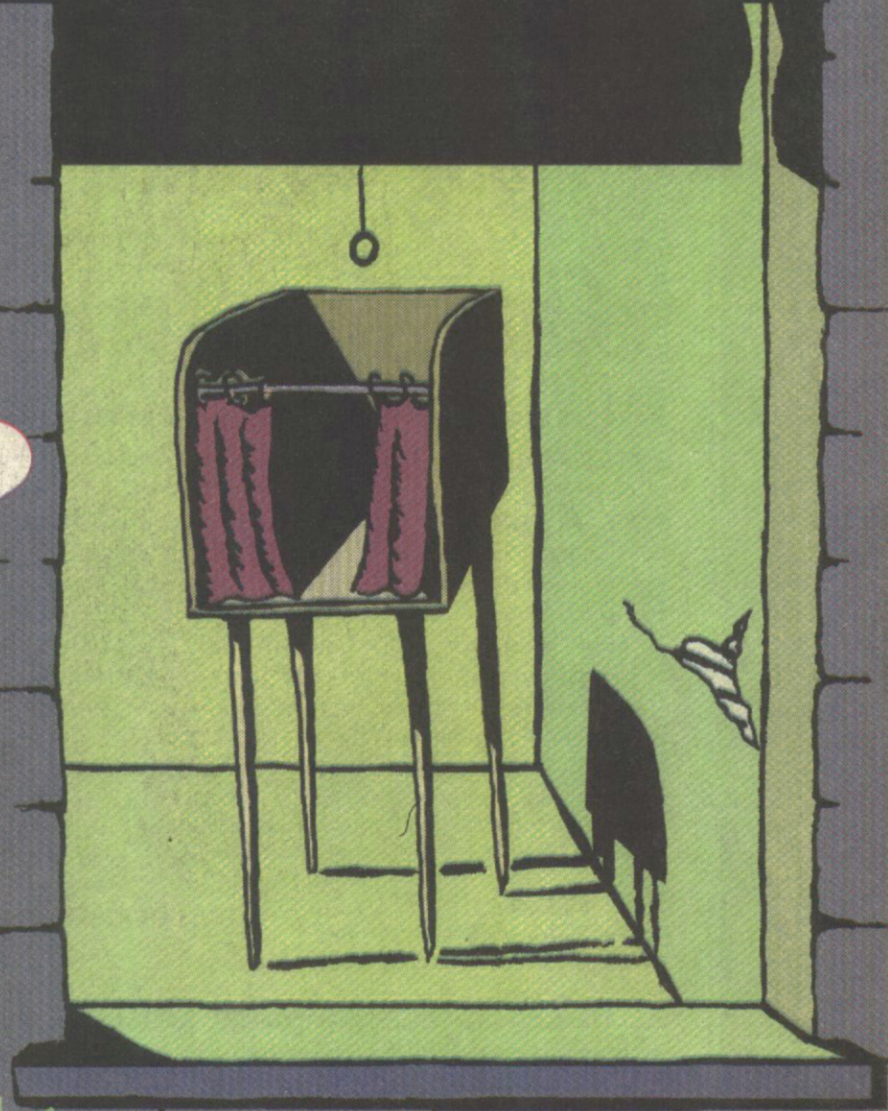
# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

November 1, 1998

## Will They Vote?

Doug Ireland  
John Nichols  
Salim Muwakkil  
& David Moberg  
on the 1998 elections

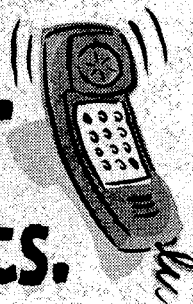


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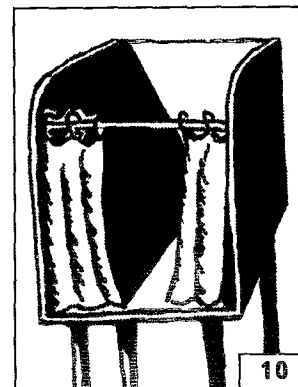
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# Letters

## Truly Appalling

Your new Appall-o-Meter graphic deserves a 4.7 on its own scale.

On May 4, 1970, the nation was stunned to hear the news from Kent State University that the Ohio National Guard had killed four students who were protesting the expanded U.S. bombing in Southeast Asia. For many, the feeling was captured by that famous news photo of the student kneeling beside her fallen classmate with horror on her face.

By clipping her face out of context and attaching it to the column of semi-humorous Appall-o-Meter stories, you cheapen the horror that she and millions of others felt for the killings at Kent State.

**Lee Hartman**  
Carbondale, Ill.

**Steve Anderson replies:** My intention here was not to cheapen the tragedy of Kent State, but to remind us what real outrage is. I chose the young woman's face to serve as an icon for what is truly appalling, a 10 on a 10-point scale. Sure, some of the stories in this column are humorous, in an ironic sense, but the closer they rank to 10, the less funny they are, and the irony starts to bite back.

Your letter has inspired discussion at *In These Times* about the appropriation of history, irony as a social tool and why we on the left are perceived as cold, serious types with no sense of humor. We invite more readers to offer their opinion on the graphic. Should we keep it?

## Stop Hand-Wringing

Democrats have spent a good amount of hot air and hand-wringing over the New Mexico Green Party's growing strength. This consternation is heard again in Julia Goldberg's "Spoiling the Party" (August 9) and Doris Higgins' letter (September 20). The complaints sound a consistent theme: By "throwing away your vote" on a Green candidate, you help elect Republicans. This steady chorus is strikingly short-sighted.

The Greens perform an invaluable service. It has become a cliché to decry the unitary "Republicratic" party under which we now plod. Nonetheless, too many on the left insist on clinging to the hope that the Democrats will speak to issues that have fallen off the national radar screen. This misguided loyalty has, in turn, been rewarded with the ascendancy of the Democratic Leadership Council. Contrary to mainstream rhetoric, this consolidation of power in a neoliberal political class does not represent a "shift to the center" in American politics. Rather, it tolls the further marginalization of voices from the left.

The Greens alone will not staunch this steady bloodletting. But what this party does is mount a steady, and increasingly successful, assault on our lamentable one-party system, the benefits of which will not be felt today, or even this November.

The Greens, as well as the New Party, have begun to mount on the left what the Christian Coalition began on the right in 1988—the steady accretion of electoral significance.

I am not a Green, but I admire the work they have done. My hope is that others who wish to stem the growth of American reactionism will cease their complaining about the impact Greens have on Democratic electoral chances and instead join in pressing the issues that need to be raised. At the very least, the Greens and other "third parties" like them may force the Democrats to reach out to the marginalized constituencies they have so shamelessly abandoned.

**Stephen Greetham**  
Santa Fe, N.M.

## Correction

The fifth sentence in the statement by Studs Terkel on page 15 of the October 18 issue should have read, "UPS workers won that strike last year because people recognized how close it was to them." We regret the error.

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SYLVIA



By Nicole Hollander

# A Funny Thing Happened

In the weeks prior to the release of Bill Clinton's videotaped grand jury testimony about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, impeachment was in the air. Months of infuriating dissembling by Clinton had led to angry demands for his ouster and a barrage of editorials calling for his resignation. During these weeks, the public's perception of the president's morality dropped precipitously. And yet, his four-hour performance, in which he once again demonstrated that his relationship to the truth is, at best, technical, produced a miraculous feat. By exposing himself to the public in all his tawdriness, Clinton turned the tables on his attackers and effectively ended the threat of an impeachment trial.

He achieved this stunning reversal of fortune by appealing to the good sense of Americans. Politics, he suggested, should be about public policy, not about personality or private behavior. And a substantial majority, in their wisdom, agreed. In Canton, Ohio, for example, leaders of the local establishment—newspaper editors, judges, nonprofit agencies, school officials—damned the president for undermining the myth that our political and judicial systems are built on “the truth.” Yet the majority of Canton's citizens were unmoved. Instead, they decried the attempt to bring down a president for personal behavior that is more the norm for his peers than the exception. One Canton Republican, a cashier at a local book store, told the *New York Times*, “If you're a politician, [lying] is how you get into power.” Another Republican, a supermarket clerk, agreed. “I hate to see him resign or be impeached,” she said, “It's not that this kind of thing hasn't happened to other presidents.”

In Canton, it's much easier to find Republicans and independents who side with Clinton than it is to find Democrats who want him impeached. In one upscale beauty salon, even among women who had voted against Clinton, the verdict was clearly in his favor. One housewife—who “absolutely” never liked the man—said, “This isn't a public issue. Most men would lie in that situation.” If all members of Congress had to undergo similar investigations, she added, it would all be over quickly. Others agreed that it's been a waste of money and time and that no other president has been impeached for such doings.

In Illinois, in Rep. Henry Hyde's own district, such sentiments were also common. The owner of a short-order restaurant in Addison put the whole affair on an equal plane with Hyde's own adulterous affair 30 years ago. He said he'd tell Hyde, who eats in his place and whom he supports, “You're running a country, not a bedroom.”

In this heavily Republican district, there are, of

course, many who would like to see Clinton impeached. But many Republicans believe that their party is hurting itself by going too far. One bank representative said, “Do I need to know the sordid details of his affair? No.” By wasting time on these hearings, he said, members of Congress are “not really doing what they were elected to do.”

Since 1960, when John F. Kennedy won the election as a result of the first major presidential television debate—largely because of his youthful good looks and Richard Nixon's sinister sweatiness—national elections have become captive to telegenic personalities as well as catch phrases and sound bites that appeal to the private prejudices of selected audiences. These developments, which occurred as television came to dominate our electoral process, have forced thoughtful discussion of public policy out of the elec-

**A Henry Hyde supporter said that next time he saw the congressman, he'd tell him,  
“You're running a country, not a bedroom.”**

toral arena and brought more easily grasped issues of individual behavior to center stage. Thus things that have little or nothing to do with the actual role of a national government—things like drugs, crime, welfare fraud, teen sexuality—have become the stock in trade of politicians no longer beholden to organized popular constituencies.

The main beneficiaries of this degenerative process have been corporate lobbyists, who work best outside of public scrutiny. But groups like the Christian right, with their emphasis on personal behavior, have also benefited. Frightened by the cultural changes and social dislocations brought about by obscure corporate forces, fundamentalist Christians cling to tradition and focus on the personal. Their political clout is one of the reasons that the Clinton scandal has gone so far. The public reaction is proving a healthy antidote.

Only weeks ago, pundits, and even some Democrats, were predicting disaster in the November congressional elections. Now, the backlash against Kenneth Starr and the congressional Republicans might well swing the pendulum back in favor of the Democrats. That would be a healthy development for many reasons, but especially because the scandal and its emphasis on personality and private behavior have led the public and politicians—at least on the Democratic side—to remember that voters would rather hear about public policy, not personality and private affairs.

J.W.

# Dumping Kohl, Germany Turns Left

By G. Pascal Zachary

**I**n voting on September 27 to replace Helmut Kohl as chancellor, Germans did more than toss out an old Cold Warrior who seemed out of step with the times. By electing Social Democrat Gerhard Schröder, they voted solidly in favor of a renewed defense against the ill effects of globalization and excessive market liberalization.

But just what kind of defense will Germans receive?

With unemployment at more than 10 percent and a rising tide of immigrant residents, Germany is struggling to forge a new identity at a time when it is the undisputed economic and political leader of Europe. Central to this identity is an emphasis on social cohesion and protecting that cohesion against the pressures of international competition, including the advent of a single European currency, the euro, which will replace the deutsche mark in 2002. "Berlin is about to become the capital of Europe, a Europe that isn't yet defined," says Catherine McArdle Kelleher, who heads the Aspen Institute, a liberal think tank in Berlin.

Like the French, who installed a Socialist government last year, Germans seem to want an alternative to the U.S. neoliberal orthodoxy on political economics. Schröder, however, struggled during the campaign to plainly state his alternative. He talked about cutting taxes and loosening restrictions on business, while in the same breath echoing the sentiments of labor supporters that workers need more security and better benefits.

It isn't easy to satisfy the needs of German industry with the demands for a broader social safety net. German companies are among the world's biggest exporters, so protectionism isn't an option. Labor, meanwhile, is adamantly against cutting wages and benefit standards, even if such cuts stimulate job creation.

The coming months will tell much about how Schröder will reconcile these seemingly contradictory positions. He is

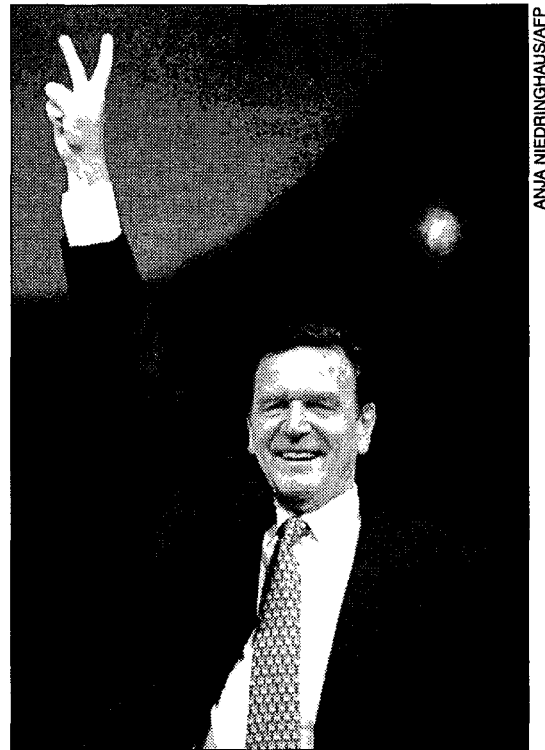
frequently likened to British Prime Minister Tony Blair and U.S. President Bill Clinton, but, unlike them, Schröder depends on the support of party activists who favor squeezing the bosses. In celebrating his victory, Schröder posed for pictures with Social Democratic Chairman Oskar Lafontaine, who stands significantly to the left of the new chancellor. During the campaign, Lafontaine spoke forcefully of the need to attack unemployment by reducing the work week without reducing pay, a proposal that is anathema to German employers and that, if not abandoned, seems sure to run counter to Schröder's wooing of big business.

Indeed, the first sign of the tensions within the Social Democratic camp will come during negotiations with the Greens over the formation of a ruling coalition. The resulting "Red-Green" partnership could herald a new era in German politics, giving the left its greatest influence since the early '30s. Yet only a day after the election, Schröder warned of "tough negotiations" with the Greens, whose most radical wing favors shutting down Germany's 20 nuclear plants and imposing an astronomical new tax on gasoline. "The Greens are crucial to the hopes of the Social Democrats, and they can exact a price," says R. Dennis Hayes, an American researcher who studies German labor issues. "How big a price is the question."

An insistence on extreme environmental measures would win favor with Green activists, but it would make the task of achieving economic security for the beleaguered German working class more difficult. At a time when the costs of supporting the former East Germany remain high—one in five people there who want to work are jobless—environmental issues would seem to take a back seat to addressing the growing belief

that truly unifying Germany will take a generation or more to accomplish.

Then there is the question of Germany's response to its rising immigrant community. Nativist impulses run across the political spectrum; It is not only Christian Democrats and the far right who view German-ness as a "blood tie." The stakes are high. If the country can't clarify its muddled approach to diversity, "it risks retreat into a new tribalism, where everyone is barricading themselves in their homes,"



Gerhard Schröder

says Manuel Castells, a sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley, who watches European political trends.

The challenge of forging a new German identity puts a premium on moderation. Harald Trabold, an economist with the left-of-center German Institute for Economic Research in Berlin, says that the German left has been the prisoner of extremists for too long and that "thoughtful" centrists must now take the lead. "Traditionalists in both parties," he says, "must be suppressed for Schröder to move ahead." ■

G. Pascal Zachary is the author of *Endless Frontier: Vannevar Bush, Engineer of the American Century*.

ANJA NIEDRINGHAUS/AFP



# The Cato Institute's Pet Bolshevik

by Fred Solowey

**A** Democratic president is considering privatizing Social Security, the most successful, well-run and popular of all government programs, a social insurance system that keeps millions of retirees and younger Americans out of poverty? How did it happen?

Flash back to 1983 and an article appearing in the *Cato Journal*, a publication of the then-obscure libertarian think tank, the Cato Institute. In a provocatively titled essay, "Achieving Social Security Reform: A 'Leninist' Strategy," Stuart Butler and Peter Germanis of the Heritage Foundation—the Washington think-tank that provided the blueprint for much of the Reagan revolution—bemoaned the tendency of conservatives to be content with pointing out what they see as the inherent contradictions of Social Security and predicting its inevitable collapse. Pointing to their favorite Bolshevik, they wrote, "Unlike many other socialists at the time, Lenin recognized that fundamental change is contingent both upon a movement's ability to create a focused political coalition and upon its success in isolating and weakening its opponents."

Taking a page from Lenin's *Left Wing Communism an Infantile Disorder*, Butler and Germanis argued for winning "small legislative changes that embellish the present Individual Retirement Account (IRA) system, making it in practice a small-scale, private Social Security system." They advised conservatives to conceive a strategy that would divide the Social Security coalition. For example, the opposition of senior citizen groups could be neutralized by leaving their benefits untouched in any privatization plan. That, they said, should be accompanied by a campaign to weaken political support for the system, especially among the young. This would be achieved by waging "guerrilla warfare

against both the current Social Security system and the coalition that supports it." Important targets for building the campaign are "key individuals in the media" and "the banking industry and other business groups."

Be prepared for a fight, they cautioned: "It could be many years before the conditions are such that a radical reform of Social Security is possible. But then, as Lenin well knew, to be a successful revolutionary, one must also be patient and consistently plan for real reform."

Since 1983 the increasingly prominent Cato Institute has churned out scores of papers, studies and books to help push the guerrilla war forward. The institute has amassed a \$3 million

war chest—from the finance industry and conservative foundations—to help "create the intellectual climate for privatization." State Street Global Advisors investment firm, American Express, Citibank, American International Group, IBM and Digital Equipment Corporation have been among its most generous contributors.

Conservative ideologues understand that Social Security is the big prize in their overall campaign against the role of government in society. If Americans lost confidence in Social Security, then what government social programs would they continue to support? Moreover, Social Security privatization would carry such a large price tag (current benefits would have to be paid, but Social Security taxes no longer would be coming in to cover the bill) that the government, faced with huge deficits, would be unable to fund other programs.

The Reagan revolution lives. ■

Fred Solowey is a writer in Washington, D.C.



# Alan in Wonderland

The following exchange between Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin took place in a House Banking and Financial Services Committee Hearing on September 16, 1998.

**Sanders:** You're probably not going to miss me, but I think I'm coming back.

**Rubin:** And Mr. Sanders, we look forward to it.

**Sanders:** In all due respect to my friends Mr. Greenspan [and] Mr. Rubin ... their testimony, which is similar to testimony that we have heard from them in recent years, is coming from an "Alice in Wonderland" perspective; it just doesn't have anything to do with reality. Mr.

Chairman, whether anyone likes it or not—and I hate to break this to you—the IMF has failed and failed dismally. ... Let me say a word about Russia—poor, tragic Russia. When communism fell in 1991, the Russian government received attention and policy guidance and \$20 billion from the IMF. ... Never before have we seen an economy decline in seven years like the Russian economy has declined under the guidance of the brilliant advice of the IMF, not to mention \$20 billion in taxpayer money. ... This is a country that used to manufacture; they don't do it any more. Their children are hungry, their old people don't receive pensions. They used to produce food. Now they import food. But meanwhile, they now have a

handful of billionaire oligarchs, who have made a fortune illegally, having a substantial role in running that country.

So, Mr. Chairman, it is fine for all of us in a very congenial way to be laughing and chatting about what's going on, but I think we are blind not to recognize that the IMF has failed. And while we do not and must not turn our backs on what's going on in this world ... any major league manager that has a pitcher who's won three games and lost 20, you know what? You say to that pitcher, thank you, you're going down to the minors. We're trying a new strategy. Your strategy has failed.

So I would simply like to ask Mr. Greenspan ... given the horrendous record of the IMF in Russia, in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America and all the suffering that it has caused to poor people while rich people in almost every country have become richer, how with a straight face can you come before the taxpayers of the United States and say, Hey, we want \$18 billion more to continue this failed policy?

**Greenspan:** Congressman, if we agreed with your appraisal, I think we would agree with your conclusion. I think the problem is we don't agree with your appraisal.

**Sanders:** I think that maybe the people of Russia today who are suffering so terribly, who have seen such a major decline in their economy through IMF guidance over the last seven years, would love you to tell us and tell them about the successes of the IMF in Russia.

**Greenspan:** I would say that the IMF had very little to do with the decline that existed in Russia. I think that you start off with a centrally planned economy, in which a goodly part of what they are producing is not available to be sold in the market, and that very rapidly dissolves. I'm not arguing that they moved from a centrally planned economy to a free market economy. That's scarcely the case.

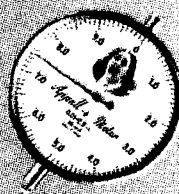
I've argued elsewhere that, indeed, the type of markets that they have is scarcely the type that we support ... an institutional structure which enables exchange to be viable and productivity efficient. Russia has scarcely been able to do that. And I would suggest to you that if the IMF never existed, we'd be looking at very much the same sort of problems that they have.

**Sanders:** But we put \$20 billion of the IMF into Russia. ■

## Appall-o-Meter

The In These Times Index of Indecencies

By David Futreffe



### Full Serve 8.1

Gas stations in the Ningxia region of China are offering a new incentive to their customers: After filling up their tanks, they can get a little sex on the side from gas station prostitutes. "Sometimes there is no clear dividing line whether the customers come for gas or sex, but the sex service is based on the condition that you have to buy petrol first," reports the Xinhua news agency. "No petrol, no honey."

### Love Shack 7.2

There's no shortage of people trying to make a buck off the current White House scandal. At Club Love, a popular adult Web site, one can find exclusive audio clips of phone sex and other interminating kinky conversations between Bill and Monica Lewinsky, along with **HARDCORE** photos depicting scandalous sex scenes between them in the Oval Office and the White House Home Theatre! No need to "wade through [the] tedium" of the Starr Report:

"This hot, hilarious interactive photo-sheet will show you the 'hole' picture of the Lewinsky-Clinton story." No, Club Love didn't manage to sneak a video camera into the White House. According to a disclaimer, "The shockingly realistic, hardcore scenes [involving Bill and Monica] were cre-



ated by top artists, and stunningly staged by professional actors." And yet some people continue to suggest that Americans aren't interested in the affairs of government.



# Message in a Ballot

By Craig Aaron

It's common knowledge that African-Americans are the Democratic Party's most loyal voting block. Too loyal, some say.

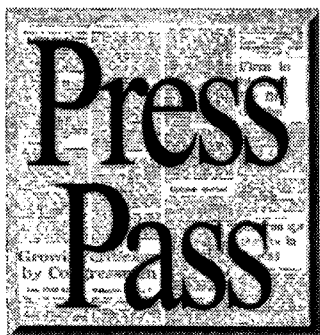
The July 18 issue of *The Economist* offers a modest proposal to remedy this situation: "If black voters applied themselves in a Machiavellian manner, they would vote Republican in large enough numbers to worry Democrats and thereby gain more influence in both parties." That's exactly what seems to be happening in races across the country this fall. From Florida to Colorado, local black politicians and pundits are encouraging black voters to desert the Democrats in exchange for some political leverage. They are willing to sacrifice Senate seats and governors' mansions to send a message.

Perhaps the most interesting race is in Missouri, where the NAACP has refused to support the Democratic nominee for Senate, Jay Nixon, because of his repeated attempts, as state attorney general, to end court-supervised desegregation programs in Kansas City and St. Louis. This conflict "threatens not only the ousting of one of Missouri's most conservative lawmakers," Melinda Roth and Safir Ahmed write in the August 25 issue of *The Riverfront Times*, the St. Louis alternative newsweekly, "but the one political ace African-Americans have always held: unity as a voting bloc."

As soon as Nixon won the August 4 primary, the president of the St. Louis NAACP, Charles Mischeaux, sent a letter to prominent Democrats warning that Nixon was "not an acceptable candidate for the African-American community." Mischeaux has pledged to picket Nixon fundraising events and help raise money for his Republican incumbent opponent, Christopher "Kit" Bond. Mischeaux and others charge that

Nixon was obnoxious in his repeated filings of motions to end desegregation programs—playing "to the gallery" in suburban, white areas rather than consulting the black community.

But the protest is about more than desegregation; it's about taking the black community for granted. While Missouri voters are more than 85 percent white, blacks could cast the decisive vote in a close race (Bond garnered only 52 percent of the vote in 1992).



But, as Roth and Ahmed point out, Bond's record on desegregation is also terrible. Plus, while Nixon supports affirmative action, Bond opposes it, and he has voted against the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Commission, a minimum wage increase, school breakfast programs and funds to repair dilapidated schools. Bond also is considered by the Democratic National Committee to be one of the most vulnerable Republicans. Defeating him is key if there is any hope of Democrats taking back the Senate in 2000—a lofty enough goal. "Bond is the worst candidate," says Harold Crumpton, an African-American member of the Missouri Public Service Commission. "For these people to join in and continue the onslaught the Republican Party is bringing on the African-American community is just disingenuous. This makes no sense."

This is not just a problem for Democrats in Missouri. According to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 90 percent of black voters nationwide supported Democratic congressional candidates in 1994. Two years later, that number dropped to 82 percent—it is likely to dip even lower this year. African-American leaders in several key states

are openly flirting with the Republican Party. In races where a few percentage points can make or break an election and, in turn, determine the balance of power in Congress (not to mention those precious presidential electoral votes in 2000), the Democrats must take notice.

But it's a gamble. The leverage politics game easily could backfire. In the long run, there's probably nothing worse for African-Americans than prolonging Republican control of the Senate (can you say Chairman Jesse Helms?). In the NAACP's recent report card for the 105th Congress (reprinted in the September issue of *Emerge*), Democrats, who include all 39 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, earned a B+ by supporting NAACP positions in 87 percent of votes. The Republicans agreed with the NAACP only 18 percent of the time—an F. With a Republican chokehold on the legislative pipeline, issues on the black agenda don't stand a chance.

.....

The latest issue of the *Index on Censorship* is devoted to the plight of Europe's "largest and most despised minority," the Roma, or Gypsies. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, violence against the Roma—once a target of Nazi exterminators—has intensified. They have become regular targets of Eastern European skinhead gangs and face widespread racism in more mainstream circles. At the same time, the British magazine shows, the Roma have a unique literary tradition, and are finally demanding recognition and cultural autonomy. "Living scattered all over Europe, the Roma are a minority that does not conveniently fit either national or linguistic definitions," Ursula Owen writes. "Their world is, for the most part, a hidden one, ignored, unknown—and persecuted. ... They are in fact the pariahs of Europe." Maybe now that's starting to change.

.....

*Annals of Serious Journalism: Time's* September 7 issue asks—no kidding—a group of comedians to come up with their best joke about the crisis in Russia. To wit: "I recommend that Russia stop trying to pursue a Western-style economy and instead pursue a country-western style economy." ■

# In Washington State, A Replay of Prop 209

By Patrick Mazza

SEATTLE

In November, Washington state will be this year's most crucial battleground in the war over affirmative action. On the ballot is Initiative 200, which would bar race or gender considerations in government hiring, contracting and higher education, a virtual replay of California's Proposition 209 that passed in 1996. Employing the same "anti-discrimination" rhetoric, I-200 is advertised as "The Washington State Civil Rights Initiative."

After the California victory, anti-affirmative action forces thought they would sweep the nation. But they stalled after a 1997 defeat in Houston. I-200, which made the ballot with paid signature gatherers and a \$178,000 donation from high-profile Prop-209 supporter Ward Connerly's American Civil Rights Institute, is trying to jump start the national campaign. The stakes are high. Victory would "hasten the pace of change" toward a national rollback of affirmative action, says John Carlson, chairman of Yes on Initiative 200. But a loss in such a heavily white state would spell trouble for that effort.

At the same time, if voters pass I-200 in a state where racial pressures are relatively low, "it would send a demoralizing message," says Ronald Takaki, a University of California, Berkeley, professor who was active against 209. After all, Washington's liberal reputation was fortified in 1996 when it elected Gary Locke as the nation's first Chinese-American governor. A few years earlier, Seattle—where minorities comprise about 10 percent of the population—elected Norm Rice, an African-American, as mayor. Clearly, it would not benefit a state heavily reliant

on tourism and trade with Asia to be regarded as racist.

As in California, where one exit poll showed 27 percent of Prop-209 supporters believed they were voting for affirmative action, there is confusion over I-200's effect. The official ballot title reads: "Shall government be prohibited from discriminating or granting preferential treatment based on race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin?" In a June poll of prospective voters, 64 percent supported the initiative when read the

good. But there is poison underneath. Do we want to ban discrimination against white men?"

Ironically, under preferences for veterans and older and disabled workers, white males are hired by the state in greater numbers than any minority group. Those policies would remain if I-200 passes. White women, the prime beneficiaries of affirmative action in government in Washington, have the most to lose. I-200 opponents are playing the gender angle prominently, learning from mistakes made by opponents to Prop 209. "Connerly and company racialized affirmative action," Takaki says. "They covered up the fact that the primary beneficiaries in California have been women, especially white women. We made a strategic mistake by not challenging this racialization."

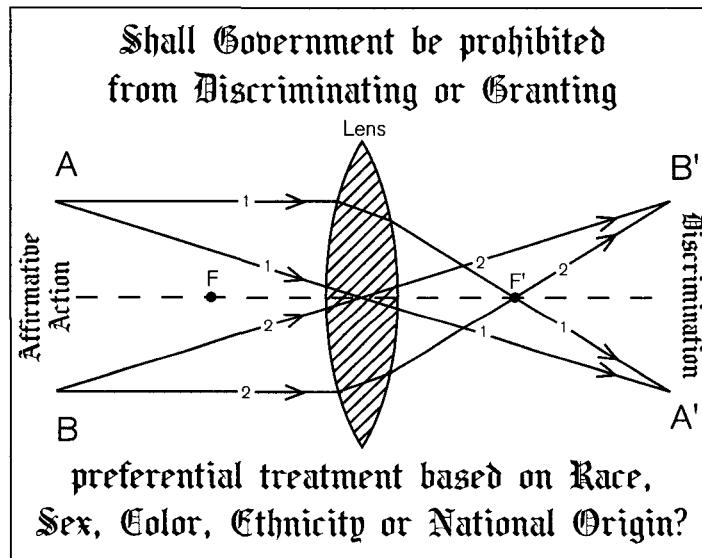
Affirmative action is in the interest of white women and a lot of white men whose wives are employed in professional occupations."

Washington's most powerful business interests, including Microsoft, Boeing, Weyerhaeuser and Starbucks, have lined up solidly against I-200. The Seattle Chamber of Commerce has come out against it, and *Seattle Times* Publisher Frank Blethen is placing a series of ads opposing I-200 in his paper. However, Washington corporations, which would not be directly affected by I-200, have problems of their own. Boeing, facing several major

employment discrimination lawsuits, downsized African-American employees in the early '90s at a higher rate than any other category, the *Times* found in an investigative series in February. It also revealed that "the proportion of white men among Microsoft employees is up since 1990, and the percentage of women is down."

But in such a close race, opponents of the initiative will take whatever help they can get. The key to defeating I-200 "is making sure people know exactly what this would do," Ackerman says. "We have a really tough battle." ■

Patrick Mazza is a writer based in Seattle.



title. Support dropped to 49 percent when respondents were told the measure would end affirmative action. A September poll showed 53 percent in support of the ballot title, while at the same time 50 percent said they support affirmative action. The drop from June to September could indicate the effects of a vigorous campaign against the initiative.

"These last few points are going to be pretty heavy lifting for us," NO! 200 spokeswoman Michelle Ackerman says. I-200 opponents unsuccessfully sued to have the ballot title specify that it would end race- and gender-based affirmative action. "The ballot title is poll-tested code. On the face, it sounds



# Easy Money and the Rest of Us

**"T**hat's easy money," Phil Anderson, 31, said with a breezy knowing smile as he stood next to his Bloomberg computer terminal in shorts, sneakers and sport shirt, talking about the see-sawing financial market in Hong Kong.



It was early September, and Wall Street was reeling from yet another of its many recent dives. A few feet away from Anderson, in a tiny one-room office in midtown Manhattan, sat Leonard Panzer, 30, and Matt Rich, 29. They were feverishly working the phones, trying to calm anxious clients of the investment firm they manage, Kauser Capital LLC.

The casually clad trio seemed more like frat brothers on a New York City vacation than would-be masters of the universe. Still, if you want to understand the frightening gyrations that have swept financial markets the past few months, a good place to start is the secret, rarely examined world these young men inhabit—the world of hedge funds.

The Manhattan office building where Kauser Capital is located, 237 Park Avenue, houses so many of these newfangled firms that it's come to be known as the Hedge Fund Hotel. For several years, these funds have been the private secret of this country's super rich, proliferating in absolute silence in the closets of international high finance. If you were a multimillionaire and managed to put your money into one of these exclusive funds—they never advertise and aren't regulated—you made skads of money as these funds speculated that particular currencies or markets would go up or down.

George Soros is the king of hedge funds, and his Quantum Fund is the one all others seek to emulate. In 1992, Soros bet the British would be forced to devalue the pound. He was right, and thus became the first person to make \$1 billion in a single year.

Since then, every whiz kid on Wall Street has been panting to leave his firm and start his own hedge fund. Ninety-five percent of the hedge funds that exist today are less than 10 years old. Many funds reach enormous size very quickly. Because hedge fund managers charge a 1 percent fee to their clients and take a commission of 20 percent of all profits, they can become very rich very fast, but they have to deliver huge returns to justify such outrageous commissions. Thus, they gamble big, and sometimes they lose big.

When they do, millions of people suffer.

In late August, for instance, Soros lost \$2 billion betting the wrong way on Russian bonds. He blasted Boris Yeltsin in public and told him he better devalue. A few days later, Yeltsin did just that, driving the Russian people into a poverty that has reached catastrophic levels.

Speculators and hedge funds that launch repeated "currency assaults" on countries by moving mountains of money in and out of world markets with the blink of a cursor have left devastation everywhere. The Russian economy has disintegrated. Indonesia, the world's fourth largest country, has 20 percent unemployment. Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and now Brazil are reeling from the sudden flight of foreign investment. "No one talks about the social costs of these violent swings," says Marc Chandler, vice president and senior currency strategist at Deutsche Banks Securities. "A generation of sacrifice has gone out the window in many of these countries."

"The hedge funds are the bloodhounds," radical financial analyst Doug Henwood says. "They're the most extreme, volatile and predatory form of finance

**Hong Kong's fight to stave off the hedge funds would fail. The speculators would win. "It's a lay-up," he said. "Easy money."**

capital. The fate of entire countries and industries depends on these people, and for the most part they're arrogant kids who know nothing about the real world."

Back in early September, the three whiz kids at Kauser Capital were still brimming with confidence. Hong Kong's fight to stave off the hedge funds would fail, Anderson assured me. The speculators would win. "It's a lay-up [in Hong Kong]," he said. "Easy money."

Then came late September, and the sudden bailout of one of the biggest hedge funds in the world, Long-Term Capital Management. The Federal Reserve Bank hastily convened a meeting of top bankers and pressured them to come up with \$3.65 billion to keep *wunderkind* John W. Meriwether's fund afloat.

Meriwether, like Soros, had lost a few billion in Russia. But unlike Soros, he had borrowed enormous sums from banks, and his firm stood to lose trillions it did not have if it defaulted. So the Fed decided in the dead of night that Long-Term Capital was too big to fail. The entire world financial system would be threatened by the bankruptcy of a hedge fund few Americans had ever heard of and no government had ever regulated.

Easy money isn't so easy after all. ■

# A Democratic Debacle Foretold

By Doug Ireland

**T**he overriding question going into the November elections is: What effect will the interminable impeachment investigation of Bill Clinton have on the electorate? Two races provide snapshots of how the Clinton scandals have already poisoned our politics.

In South Carolina, Republican Governor David Beasley, an ultra-conservative, born-again Christian who is one of the favorites of the religious right, is facing a stiff challenge from Jim Hodges, a corporate lawyer from the Democrats' right wing who has made legalized gambling his main issue (and reaped heavy contributions from the gambling industry in the process). The reason? Beasley, who ran TV ads morphing Hodges into Bill Clinton, is now the target of a Democratic lawsuit under the state's Freedom of Information Act, which is trying to prove that the governor had an extra-marital affair with a pulchritudinous state employee. Beasley has been stalling on turning over e-mail, phone records, state credit card receipts and other documents, and he will soon be deposed under oath by Democratic lawyers who say they'll ask him if "he has used his office to conduct sexual activity." (Sound familiar?)

Meanwhile, in the Illinois swing congressional district now held by Republican Jerry Weller—which includes a slice of industrial Chicago and a swath of downstate farmland—the Democratic candidate, Gary Mueller, has made public a formal legal document in which he swore under oath that he never committed adultery, engaged in homosexual activity, abused his wife or children, experimented with illegal drugs, or been charged with or convicted of a felony. Mueller took the step after being pestered with morality questions by voters and reporters in the district.

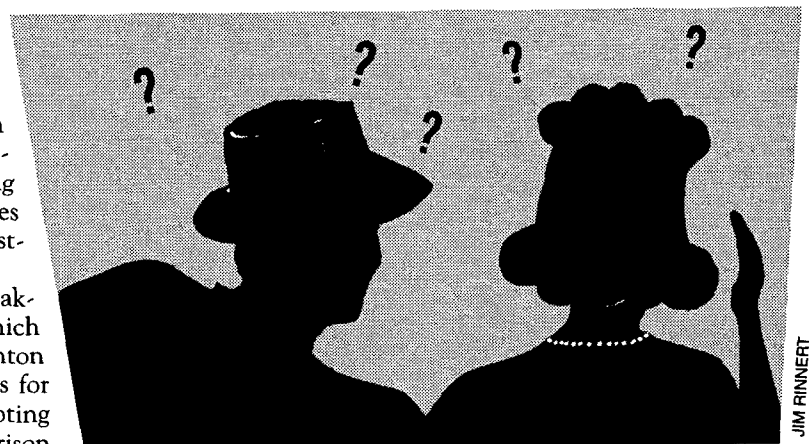
In both races, Democrats are behaving like Republicans to show that they're not like Clinton. All across the country, Democrats are terrified that the turnout of eligible voters will be the lowest ever, with Clinton's lies about all those Sunday trysts with his "little humidor" (as Jay Leno dubbed Monica) motivating cultural conservatives to come to the polls in droves while driving down turnout among dispirited and disgusted Democrats and previously pro-Bill independents.

The results from the primaries earlier this year are making the Democrats' knees knock. Take New York, which with Massachusetts is one of the two most pro-Clinton states. Despite heavily contested Democratic primaries for both senator and governor, turnout in the September voting declined to just 15 percent, a 13-point drop in comparison

to the off-year of 1994. The black vote—crucial to any Democratic hopes of November victories—was down to a paltry 10 percent, and even the considerable Jewish vote, another staple of Democratic wins, was off six points.

Results were similarly dismal throughout the country. According to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, only 17 percent of the voting age population participated in this year's primaries, down 45 percent since 1966, and only 9 percent of eligible Democrats voted in primaries this year, a 52 percent drop since 1966. No wonder Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota privately conceded—even before the Starr report—that Republicans would pick up enough Senate seats this year to give them a filibuster-proof majority of 60. And a study by the National Committee for an Effective Congress—the most technically effective liberal political action committee—showed that the Clinton scandals would have a disastrous effect on Democratic chances in more than half of the 44 marginal districts in which turnout will determine the extent of Democratic losses in the House. (Eighty members of Congress from both parties are running unopposed, and the rest of the seats are considered safe for one party or the other.)

Thus, Democratic chances of taking back the Congress are less than zero—especially since historically there is usually a loss of



JIM RINNERT



Senate and House seats in off-year elections by the party in the White House. But by early October there was a lot of talk among inside-the-Beltway pundits, who, sifting the shifting sands of public opinion as reflected in the polls, claimed to detect a backlash against the Republicans that could curtail Democratic defeats. And it's true that Congress' job approval rating, which had been as high or nearly as high as Clinton's in several national polls, dropped seven to 10 points.

**B**ut there are serious doubts as to whether the national numbers will translate into more Democratic victories at the state and local level. For one thing, Democrats' attempts to run on non-scandal issues like HMOs and Social Security are being drowned out by the mass media's focus on a potential impeachment. On local TV news, from which most voters get their information, political coverage of races in each state is minimal, smothered by the usual combination of scandal, crime and happy talk. And while voter perception that the economy is doing well—which, thanks to Alan Greenspan's interest rate cut, will continue through the election—has helped keep Clinton's job approval ratings high, it also helps all incumbents. Most polls show that two-thirds to three-quarters of voters believe their own members of Congress should be re-elected, even if they can't name them. That frees the GOP to concentrate its well-oiled efforts on the winnable marginal and open seats.

Most telling is that the Democratic candidates have almost universally tried to put distance between themselves and Clinton. The only Democratic Senate candidates who have invited Clinton to campaign with them thus far are those who haven't a prayer of winning, like Ohio's Mary Boyle—an attractive candidate sure to be swamped by wildly popular Governor George Voinovich—and Carol Moseley-Braun, Illinois' ethically challenged, self-immolating incumbent. (The one exception is Brooklyn Rep. Chuck Schumer, currently neck-and-neck with New York Sen. Al D'Amato—whose poll numbers went south in the pro-Clinton Empire State when he chaired the Whitewater hearings. In a crapshoot, Schumer has invited Clinton to campaign for him in mid-October, hoping to stimulate urban black and Hispanic voter turnout. But that move could backfire in the Republican-dominated suburbs and upstate.) Even California Sen. Barbara Boxer, a Clinton in-law, has been forced to criticize the president, but her poll numbers are still sinking.

Most House Democrats seem to be drawing lessons from the fate of Massachusetts freshman Rep. Jim McGovern, one of the most liberal members of the House. McGovern rushed to Clinton's side when the president appeared in the Bay State immediately following his disastrous August 17 address to the nation. Before that, his seat was considered as leaning Democratic, but the latest polls and rankings now have McGovern in serious trouble.

Conversely, vociferous Republican Clinton critics in marginal seats appear to have defied the GOP's national dip in the polls. For example, Idaho's Rep. Helen Chenoweth, the militias' darling, was considered beatable by Democratic strategists, but she has survived revelations of an extra-marital affair with spots attacking Clinton's morality, and she is now ahead in the race. And North Carolina's Republican Senator Lauch Faircloth—who became one of the most visible Clinton-bashers during the Senate Whitewater hearings and was once considered vulnerable to a challenge from multimillionaire conservative Democratic trial lawyer John Edwards—is now 10 points ahead in the polls.



**S**o it all depends on turnout, which has been steadily nose-diving for three decades. If it hits a historic low, the result will be a Democratic debacle. Translation:

a loss of a minimum of 15 (and more likely 20) Democratic seats in the House. In the Senate, Republicans could pick up open Democratic seats in Kentucky and Ohio and defeat Democratic incumbents Boxer (California), Harry Reid (Nevada), Fritz Hollings (South Carolina) and probably Russ Feingold (Wisconsin) and Patty Murray (Washington). Democrats are sure to pick up only one open

**The results from the primaries earlier this year are making the Democrats' knees knock. Their chances of taking back the Congress are less than zero.**

GOP seat with the election of Evan Bayh in Indiana (Little comfort for progressives there; Bayh is campaigning as a "bipartisan conservative" in his TV ads). And unless Schumer manages to eke out a win over D'Amato in New York (where "The Fonz," as the local tabloids call him, is outspending Schumer 2 to 1), that would give the Republicans a net gain of six seats, one more than they need to defeat any filibuster—the last bulwark against Republican depredations (and, for that matter, Clinton sellouts).

In gubernatorial races, Republicans—who already control two-thirds of the state houses—will snatch power from Democrats in Florida (where Jeb Bush is coasting to an easy



# Spin Anatomy

Clinton's bounce-back in opinion polls after the release of his videotaped deposition can largely be credited to the White House's brilliant public relations counterattack.

First, the Clinton propaganda machine pre-spun the release of the president's videotaped grand jury testimony, priming TV reporters to unanimously predict that the tapes would show a snarling, angry Clinton routed by questions about his lies and his X-rated dalliances. But when the country finally got a look at the four-hour inquest, it saw a Clinton who, though mendacious, was fully in control and calm, dominating the off-camera prosecutors' questioning with lengthy filibusters that put his case in the best possible light. The failure of the video to produce any sparks or revelations—most of the damaging material had long ago been leaked by the White House as a pre-emptive strike—made for boring TV, counter to expectations. Score one for Bill.

Next, the Clinton camp floated the trial balloon of censure of the president as an alternative to impeachment, knowing that the Republican leadership would knock it down. Newt Gingrich, the White House knew, would never agree to a simple censure because he could not control his own troops—GOP whip Tom DeLay of Texas, the point man for the House Republicans' hard right, had already declared his unalterable opposition to a congressional slap-on-the-wrist for Clinton. Gingrich was never going to agree to

censure because it would have cost him his fragile hold on the speakership. But censure quickly gained favor with the public, and when the GOP shot it down, just as the Clintonites expected, the Republicans lost points.

Then the Congressional Democrats, pumped up by the White House damage control operation, put up fierce resistance to the public release of any more documents and tapes from Ken Starr's voluminous files, and fought a series of battles over the House Judiciary Committee's rules of procedure designed to paint the Republicans as partisan. The GOP, with typical stupidity, fell into the trap, running roughshod over the Democrats and raising the rhetorical level of its attacks on Clinton's morality. Inevitably, after all this, the Republicans' poll numbers eroded further.

Of course, the Democratic strategy had already been laid out well before the release of the Starr report. Back in June, a secret memo by the president's neoconservative pollsters, Mark Penn and Doug Schoen, proposed that the best plan for Democrats was to paint Republicans as "the party of partisanship while we are the party of progress." Anticipating that the Clinton scandals could spell disaster for Democrats, Penn and Schoen advised that "we do not want to make this election about a 'Democratic' Congress, but we do need a defining national message on at least the TV news in the final months that counters Republican attacks." And in the national polls, at least, the Clinton-centered strategy worked. **D.I.**

victory) and Maryland (where unpopular incumbent Parris Glendening will be replaced by Ellen Sauerbrey). The GOP will keep its important governorships in the big states, with the possible exception of California, where its candidate—state Attorney General Dan Lungren—has failed to run a focused campaign against Democratic Lt. Gov. Gray Davis, who's painted Lungren as a puppet of the tobacco lobby. (Californians are notorious ticket-splitters, and Boxer's defeat would, curiously, make Davis' victory more likely. But the credible Green candidate, former Democratic Congressman Dan Hamburg—who is attacking Davis as a corporate lackey—might well draw off enough votes to elect Lungren.) By keeping the state houses they now control—and, concomitantly, increasing their dominion over state legislatures—the Republicans would largely control the redistricting process in the wake of the 2000 census. After they get done gerrymandering House districts to their liking, we'll be facing the prospect of Republican control of Congress for the next decade.

The impending Republican victory in November also has consequences for the 2000 presidential race. Defeats of House Democrats of the magnitude suggested here would spell the end of House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt's presidential hopes, and the gubernatorial races will throw up no fresh new faces who might be tempted to challenge a wounded Al Gore. And in Texas, Gov. George Bush (son of the former president, who's known familiarly as "The Shrub") is romping to a landslide re-election victory over an unknown and ill-

funded Democratic opponent, thus providing an electoral rocket launch for his putative presidential candidacy.

On the morning after the first Tuesday in November, it's likely that Democrats will be shaking their heads in sorrow and moaning, "If only Clinton had settled that damn Paula Jones lawsuit back then instead of now, this wouldn't have happened." And they won't be wrong. ■

**Doug Ireland**, the former media critic for the Village Voice, has also been a columnist for the New York Observer, New York magazine, and the Paris daily Libération.

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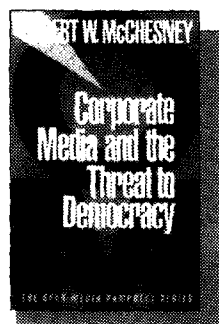
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In the '80s, Ralph Neas wrote an epic page in the history of American political activism. Now he wants to pen a whole new chapter.

Neas, the long-time executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, is the man who spearheaded the crusade to stop Robert Bork's 1987 nomination to the Supreme Court. In the thick of the Reagan-Bush era, he also led the fights to strengthen the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act and the Fair Housing Act; to preserve Title IX funding to battle gender discrimination; and to pass the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act.

This fall, Neas is challenging moderate Republican Rep. Constance Morella in a suburban Maryland district. The

"crusade," as Neas calls his campaign, is an uphill struggle in one of the most volatile election years of the century. But if Neas and a good portion of the several dozen progressives seeking congressional seats around the country can pull out victories on Nov. 3, they will reshape American politics as surely as Newt Gingrich and his minions did in 1994.

The case can be made that a left-leaning Democratic House of Representatives is a more powerful force for social and economic justice than a Democratic president—particularly when that president is a Democratic Leadership Council "centrist" who is more likely to take his marching orders from Wall Street investment houses than people who gather in union halls and church basements.

# A Few Good Candidates Progressive

## The Incumbents

Most Progressive Caucus members are well positioned to win re-election this year, since they tend to come from solidly liberal districts, such as New Yorker **Jerry Nadler's** Upper West Side turf that once sent Bella Abzug to Washington, **Nancy Pelosi's** San Francisco base where Green Ralph Nader almost beat Republican Bob Dole for second place in the 1996 presidential vote, or the Chicago district where **Luis Gutierrez** won 94 percent of the vote in 1996. Not all Progressive Caucus members are assured victory, however. Some of the most courageous members of Congress face tough reelection battles this fall. They include:



**George Brown Jr. (42nd, California)**

First elected to the House when John Kennedy was president, Brown is nearing 80 and in many senses he harkens back to another era—an era when congressional Democrats fought without reservation for a smaller military and a bigger social welfare budget. Brown voted against the Republican welfare reform bill and for the minimum-wage increase. An old-fashioned civil liberties absolutist, he passionately opposes expansion of the death penalty and the proposed amendment to ban flag desecration, and he has been a congressional leader in efforts to develop environmentally sound alternatives to fossil fuels. His is a highly competitive district, however, and Brown never faces easy races. In 1996, he won by just 996 votes, and this year could be just as close.

**Julia Carson (10th, Indiana)**



The only member of Congress who, as a child, worked as a migrant laborer and had to rely on welfare rations to survive, Carson comes by her progressive positions honestly and sticks to them with a consistency that is rare in a Congress of compromisers. Yet, as one of the few African-American members of Congress representing an overwhelmingly white district, the Indianapolis representative faces a tough re-election fight. This year, she is challenged by a wealthy fundamentalist Republican who is battering Carson for her opposition to GOP school choice schemes and the proposed ban on late-term abortions.

**Melvin Watt (12th, North Carolina)**

The state that sent Jesse Helms to the Senate isn't supposed to elect members of Congress who vote 100 percent pro-labor, defend immigrant rights, battle against limitation of women's right to choose, back a Canadian-style, single-payer health care reform and oppose the death penalty. But since his election in 1992 from a Charlotte-area district, Watt has challenged every aspect of the Helms agenda. It's no wonder, then, that this year the right is mounting a serious challenge in a district where court-ordered redistricting has dropped the percentage of African-American voters from 56 percent to about 34 percent.



So the 1998 congressional races matter. A lot. The Gingrich-led Republican caucus currently outnumbers the Democrats (and Independent Rep. Bernie Sanders) 228-207. Despite these times of big-money campaigns and gridlocked politics, a shift of 11 seats from the Republican column is hardly unimaginable.

Even in the face of Bill Clinton's meticulous efforts to undermine not just the ideology but the practical political options of his party, polls that measure voter preferences show that Democrats retain at least an outside chance of retaking the House. Such a result would herald a radical shift of the American political landscape. "Imagine an America where the hands on the levers of political power are no longer those

of Newt Gingrich, Bill Archer and Henry Hyde, but instead are Dick Gephardt, Charles Rangel and John Conyers," says the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Jackson makes the point that, since the 1994 electoral debacle brought on by Clinton's first-term failures, not only has Gingrich led the House, but key committees have been chaired by extreme right-wingers. For instance, Ways and Means chair Archer (R-Texas) earns zero ratings from the liberal Americans for Democratic Action, the American Civil Liberties Union and organized labor. In contrast, the committee's ranking Democrat, New Yorker Rangel, consistently earns 100 percent ratings from those groups. Over at

*Continued on page 16*

## Have an opportunity to shift the House to the left. By [Name]

Neil Abercrombie (1st. Hawaii)



Perhaps because he comes from a district that is farther from Washington than any other, Abercrombie has not earned the same attention as **Barney Frank** (D-Mass.). Yet he shares Frank's bombastic and uncompromising commitment to liberal ideals.

Abercrombie's take-no-prisoners debating style, his passionate advocacy for the environment, dovish record on military issues and consistent sniping at the Republican social and economic agenda mark him as a progressive hero in the House. Hawaii's economic downturn has harmed island Democrats, however, and Abercrombie faces a tougher-than-usual challenge from a conservative who dismisses the pony-tailed congressman as a '60s relic.

Lane Evans (Ill.)



There's no small measure of irony in the fact that the conscience of the Congress on issues as diverse as Agent Orange, Gulf War Syndrome, the international ban on land mines, and so many other questions of Pentagon deceit hails from a politically marginal district on the western plains of Illinois. In a Congress where few members are willing to challenge American military adventurism, the spending excesses of the military-industrial complex and the shameful treatment of veterans by the Department of Defense, Evans breaks the mold. He also passionately defends family farmers and midwestern industrial workers. Not surprisingly, those positions have put Evans in the sights of special interest groups, and this year he is at the top of the Republican hit list—facing a well-funded foe who condemns Evans for advancing "a far-left social agenda" and seeks to hang the albatross of Bill Clinton's scandals around the incumbent's neck.

Other Progressive Caucus members who face notable, if not quite so serious challenges, include first-termers **Jim McGovern** and **John Tierney**, both of Massachusetts, **Corrine Brown** of Florida and **Dennis Kucinich**, the former "boy mayor" of Cleveland, who has emerged as Congress' most passionate foe of privatization as well as possibly its most ardent defender of organized labor.

## The Newcomers

The safe bet is that most Progressive Caucus members will return to Washington next January. The question, then, is where do the new members come from? The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has tried to seed the party's ticket with conservative, Democratic Leadership Council contenders, such as Mississippi's anti-abortion, anti-gay rights, pro-gun Ronnie Shows or Kentucky's similarly right-wing Ken Lucas. And some of the most inspired progressive prospects, such as Connecticut Secretary of State Miles Rapoport, suffered heartbreaking primary defeats.

A number of fine new progressives are assured of election this fall, however. For example, Chicago's **Jan Schakowsky** is set to take the seat held for 48 of the past 50 years by civil libertarian and arts defender Sidney Yates. Veteran Cleveland prosecutor **Stephanie Tubbs Jones** essentially won the seat of former House Intelligence Committee chair Louis Stokes, a Progressive Caucus member, when she finished first in the May Democratic primary in Ohio's overwhelmingly Democratic 11th District. The same goes for New York City Councilman **Anthony Weiner**, the Democratic nominee to succeed Charles Schumer, who left his Brooklyn seat to challenge Sen. Al D'Amato.

In more competitive races, the slate of up-and-coming progressives running across the country is impressive, and more than a few are in serious contention. They include:

### Rush Holt (12th, New Jersey)



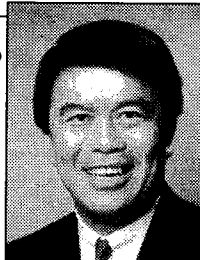
Holt, a Princeton physicist and arms control expert, is mounting a strong challenge to one of the strangest members of the Republican caucus, Rep. Mike

Pappas, who once crooned "Twinkle, Twinkle Kenneth Starr" on the floor of the House. Holt, a smart, well-spoken progressive who argues that government can and should solve society's problems, countered Pappas' tune with a review of the congressman's dismal environmental record and a suggestion that, "Maybe he should spend more time working for the interests of central New Jersey and less time singing."

### Roxanne Qualls (1st, Ohio)

Qualls, the mayor of Cincinnati, is challenging Republican incumbent Steve Chabot, a conservative who has emerged as something of a star in the GOP "Class of 1994." Chabot serves on the House Judiciary Committee and has taken an increasingly high-profile role in the impeachment dialogue. If there is a reaction against GOP Clinton bashing, Qualls could benefit. But her real strength lies with the diverse constituency, which she has served for years as an activist City Council member and mayor. In a district where 30 percent of the population is African-American, that's a significant factor.

### David Wu (1st, Oregon)



An immigrant from Taiwan who earned degrees from Stanford and Yale Law School, Wu surprised pundits by winning the hotly contested Democratic nomination for the Portland-area seat of retiring Rep. Elizabeth Furse, another Progressive Caucus member. Wu, a member of Portland's Planning Commission—which has received national recognition for its efforts to control growth—has built a diverse coalition of supporters that includes unions, environmental groups and community organizations. If he dispatches his opponent, a right-wing lobbyist, Wu can be expected to emerge as a significant spokesman in the House regarding national strategies to address urban transportation and land-use policies that are too often neglected by Washington.

# Imagine an America where the hands on the levers of political Henry Hyde, but instead are Dick Gephardt, Charles

*Continued from page 15*

the powerful Judiciary Committee, Illinois Republican Hyde is another zero, while the ranking Democrat, Michigan's Conyers, is another 100 percent.

Jackson argues that, on the basis of committee assignments alone, progressives ought to be engaged in the 1998 election campaign. Not only are they presented with a chance to shut down "the Gingrich revolution" in the House, they also have an opportunity to shift the center of gravity within the Democratic Party away from a weakened and ideologically drifting president and toward a faction of the party that stands dramatically to the left of Clinton on

virtually every fundamental issue.

Still, progressives have a right to be dubious about simply pulling the Democratic lever on Nov. 3, particularly when so many leaders of the party—starting with Clinton and Gore—seem determined to erase lines of distinction between the Democratic and Republican parties. What's encouraging is that voters who want progressives in Congress have an opportunity to vote without apology in districts from Maine to California and Hawaii to Florida.

In some cases, the names of the progressive contenders are well known. Vermont's Sanders, who grabbed a Republican-held seat in 1990, has established himself as a model of



Tracy Beckman (1st, Minnesota)

Beckman, a Democratic state senator who is challenging Republican Rep. Gil Gutknecht—a Gingrich ally elected in 1994—is waging a campaign that focuses squarely on what he calls the “failed farm policy” of the Republican party. In a fall when thousands of midwestern farmers are expected to harvest their last crop—because of a combination of poor prices, tax policies that favor agribusiness and the GOP-sponsored end to traditional farm supports—Beckman is campaigning to restore the safety net for America’s family farmers. His story is one to which voters in southeast Minnesota’s 1st District can relate; Beckman lost his small-town hardware store during the agricultural crisis of the ’80s.

Tammy Baldwin (2nd, Wisconsin)



Baldwin is a three-term state representative running for an open seat in a strongly Democratic district. Her platform emphasizes creation of a single-payer health care system, support for living wage proposals and a call for rethinking the drug war. Baldwin is one of three openly lesbian candidates with a chance of winning this year. The other two are San Diego City Council member **Christine Kehoe**, who is challenging vulnerable Republican incumbent Brian Bilbray in California’s 49th District, and **Margarethe Cammermeyer**, who is mounting an aggressive campaign against conservative two-term Rep. Jack Metcalf in Western Washington state. Cammermeyer made history in 1991 when she fought the Defense Department’s attempt to bar her from further military service because she is a lesbian.

Mark Udall (2nd, Colorado)



A state representative, Udall is seeking to keep his Boulder-based district in Democratic hands with a campaign that has drawn strong support from environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters. He is a member of the famous Udall family, which produced former House Interior Committee chairman Morris Udall and former Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall. Polls show that another family member, New Mexico Attorney General **Tom Udall**, is leading Republican **Bill Redmond** in a race for the Santa Fe-area House seat, though he must contend with a strong third-party challenge from Green **Carol Miller**, who won 17 percent of the vote in a special election in the district last year.

#### Others to watch:

Former Rep. **Richard Stallings**, who is campaigning to retake his Eastern Idaho seat from a Gingrich Republican; **Loy Sneary** of Texas’ 14th District, who is taking on libertarian Republican **Ron Paul**; and **Shirley Baca** in southern New Mexico, who takes a second shot at unseating Rep. Joe Skeen with a campaign focused on protecting social services, combating “English Only” legislation and defending Native American sovereignty.

Finally, there’s **Gary “Bats” Pelphrey**, who faces long odds in his race against Newt Gingrich in Georgia’s staunchly Republican 6th District. Pelphrey, a Marietta lawyer who earned his nickname in the Navy when a superior suggested his surname sounded like “in the belfry,” insists that he shouldn’t be counted out. After all, who’s to say in this year of political uncertainty that reasonable voters wouldn’t prefer Bats to a Newt?

power are no longer those of Newt Gingrich, Bill Archer and Rangel and John Conyers,” says the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

progressive effectiveness. In recent years, Sanders has drafted and passed legislation that ended taxpayer-funded CEO bonuses and “payoffs for layoffs” in deals between merging defense contractors, shifted \$4.9 billion from tax breaks for overseas corporations to small business initiatives, restored funding for fuel assistance programs for the elderly, and limited taxpayer liability for the Mexican peso bailout. Sanders, who won in 1996 with 55 percent of the vote and appears to be headed for victory this year, has used his position to forge an alternative to the Republican right within the House. When the Democratic leadership was still reeling from its 1994 defeat, Sanders put himself to the task of building the

House Progressive Caucus, which now numbers 58 members and advances an agenda that includes environmental justice, economic redistribution, community empowerment and social justice. “In truth,” he says, “what we are fighting for is nothing less than the vitality of American democracy, and the right of the people to have a government which represents their interests—and not just the interests of the millionaires and billionaires.” ■

**John Nichols** is editorial page editor for the Capital Times of Madison, Wis. He covers national politics for The Progressive and writes frequently for The Nation and In These Times.

# Stand By Your Man

## Will the Clinton Scandal Energize Black Voters?

By Salim Muwakkil

**P**resident Bill Clinton, a flawed and crippled lame duck, remains a political superman for much of black America. Not only has the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) come out swinging hard for "fairness" in the president's impending impeachment inquiry, but many black elected officials are using Clinton's troubles as an electoral rallying point.

"We support Bill Clinton at this critical moment in his career," declared Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) to sustained cheers at the CBC Dinner on September 19. "We know unfairness when we see it. ... Ken Starr in his report to Congress and the actions of certain members on the opposite side of the aisle do not meet the fairness test."

Waters is both CBC chair and a member of the House Judiciary Committee. Her unqualified support for Clinton is a reflection of feelings throughout the black community. Public opinion polls show wider, deeper and more consistent black support for Clinton than among other groups. According to a poll released in early September by the Pew Research Center for the People and Press, 90 percent of African-Americans have a favorable view of Clinton. There are many reasons: This administration has appointed more black people to cabinet posts and other positions of power than any other in history. The president has remained supportive of affirmative action in the face of determined opposition, and his year-long race initiative was an honorable attempt to address a festering social wound. What's more, unlike previous presidents, Clinton exhibits a sense of personal comfort in the company of African-Americans.

"There is a definite sense of black identification with Clinton as someone who stands up for African-Americans," says David Bositis, a senior policy analyst at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a black-oriented think tank in Washington. "There's a widespread feeling that he's an 'honorary black man.'"

But, says Ronald Walters, professor of political science at the University of Maryland, "The most fundamental reason for Clinton's solid block of black support is the lack of an alternative and the fact that the president's enemies are also African-Americans' political enemies, the same people who push regressive public politics."

**T**he prospect that the black electorate will be energized by the Clinton scandal has provided a spark of optimism in a gloomy political season. While Clinton has suffered a fall in the mainstream, he has become a cause célèbre in the black community. "It's my feeling that many black Americans identify with Clinton because they

see Starr as the kind of law enforcement official who is just out to get him no matter what," Bositis says. "Starr was supposed to be going after Whitewater, but [he] ends up with a sex scandal that has nothing to do with the original target. If they don't get him for one thing, they'll get him for another, many black Americans say. And that law enforcement modus operandi is all too familiar to them."

Some analysts suggest that a strategy of rallying support for a friend under attack may help reduce the growing political apathy within black America. Black voter turnout has fallen considerably in the last two elections. "We can turn it around if we convince our constituents that they have to rise up in disgust against this unfair process [of] trying to railroad the president," says Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-Texas), one of



STEPHEN JAFFE/APP

Should Rep. John Lewis be seen with this man?

four CBC members on the Judiciary Committee.

Attempts to parlay this widespread support for Clinton into electoral clout are being orchestrated most prominently by the Black Leadership Forum, a consortium of prominent black organizations. "We are making much more overt attempts to connect the attack on Clinton to the ongoing right-wing attack on black interests," says Walters, who is a strategist for the group. With the CBC, the Black Leadership Forum is focusing on rallying the black vote in key congressional elections. House elections will be close in 40 or so districts and Democrats need 11 additional seats to regain control of the House. There are 19 districts where the black electorate holds the balance of power. "It is in these 19 districts that black voter turnout will be crucial in determining which party achieves majority status in the 106th Congress," Bositis says.

Of the 39 CBC members, only four are seriously threatened. The nation's lone black senator, Carol Moseley-Braun



(D-III.), is facing a tough fight from a white conservative with unlimited coffers and a double-digit lead in the polls. In North Carolina, Rep. Mel Watt is running in a newly drawn congressional district; in Georgia, Rep. Sanford Bishop will have to work hard to eke out a win. Indiana's Rep. Julia Carson will face a tough opponent and a close race for her Indianapolis-based seat. All three of these House districts have been targeted by national Republican leaders and all have white majorities.

Using the presidential scandal to energize the black electorate is itself a bit of a scandal. With the African-American community reeling from a relentless series of social dislocations, there should be ample impetus for electoral activism. For example, during its 28th annual legislative conference, the CBC released a 10-point agenda that was totally ignored in the hoopla over the Clinton affair. Included in that agenda is a declaration of the need for a national "state of emergency" over the AIDS crisis, serious attention to improving education, a more comprehensive approach to drug abuse, initiatives to address the massive disparities in the criminal justice system and to direct more resources to urban development, and more urgent aid to black farmers.

Despite this litany of needs, African-Americans have steadily been backing away from political participation. "In general, blacks have been responding to the more conservative political culture, which—by dissing affirmative action and demonizing black leadership—is showing them contempt," Walters says. "Many black people think they haven't gotten much out of the political system anyway, so why vote?"

Ironically, Walters notes, even as black political participation has declined, its importance in the balance of victory has grown. If you look at the 1992 election, for example, the white vote split 40 percent for George Bush and 39 percent for Bill Clinton. "The black vote made the difference because they voted 83 percent for Clinton," he says. In 1996, the white vote split 45 percent for Dole and 44 percent for Clinton. "In that race, the 84 percent of blacks who voted for Clinton again elected him president."

Positis is not sure that pro-Clinton sentiments will have any appreciable electoral effect. Unless Democratic strategists can provoke a groundswell of popular support for the president or angry opposition to the GOP-Starr tactics, there is unlikely to be a significant change in congressional power. But he expects that neither of those strategies will be employed extensively. Few Democrats actually want to bring attention to the Clinton scandal: It's too difficult to justify among family-oriented constituents, and the issue of prosecutorial abuse is a sensitive one for an administration which expanded the death penalty and dimin-

ished habeas corpus appeals in its crime bill.

There are other developments that challenge the equation of black interest in the fate the Democratic Party. One of those is the growing number of African-Americans who are opting for the GOP. In 1994, 14 blacks ran as Republicans nationwide. That number has increased in 1998: There are 34 black Republican candidates, 21 in the state of Georgia alone. While there is an increase in the number of black candidates running as Republicans, there is no evidence that the black electorate itself is becoming more Republican. Walters says that the share of black Republicans has stayed within the 8 to 12 percent range for the last several elections. "Most of the cases of blacks running as Republicans in the South are examples of candidates running in majority black political districts in which the incumbent is a Democrat, and if a black person wants to run they have to do so as a Republican."

There is also the standard lament that the Democratic Party takes the black vote for granted. In Florida and Missouri, black Democrats are openly expressing displeasure with their party's position. These controversies suggest increasing fissures between party hierarchy and black dissenters during a period when party unity is essential.

For now, a "protect-the-president" strategy may be the only way Democrats can stave off further political losses. And since black Democrats have the most to lose, they are among the president's most zealous protectors. If his troubles are enough to jolt the African-American electorate out of its deepening political apathy, he will have returned the favor, however inadvertently. ■



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# Knock Knock...

By David Moberg

**A**s a political phenomenon, the September meeting of several hundred stewards from the big Chicago-area Teamsters Local 705 was, curiously, as new-fangled as it was old-fashioned. Glenn Poshard, the downstate Congressman who won the Democratic nomination for Illinois governor with strong labor support, provided a rousing old-time endorsement of trade unionism that brought cheering union stalwarts to their feet. The sentiments were not just nostalgic; at the largest UPS local union in the country, they reflected hopes for a renewed labor movement.

As Poshard left the elaborate old meeting hall, union leaders urged stewards to put up yard signs, pick up literature and sign up for a program to personally contact "friends and family" to drum up support. "I've got a Poshard sign in my front yard, and I'm putting another where there's lots of traffic," steward Ray Brockton said. "I'm talking it up with my neighbors and guys at work. I'm going to back that man as much as I can."

In an age of politics dominated by television advertising, door-to-door campaigning and yard signs seem anachronistic. Yet they are key components of organized labor's new approach to politics, a strategy to educate and mobilize members that is proving both potent and popular. This revival of grass-roots politics, which has been building slowly and sporadically for more than a decade, got a boost from John Sweeney's election as president of the AFL-CIO in 1995 and labor's aggressive effort during the 1996 campaign. Last spring in California, using both TV ads and a blitz by 24,000 union activists, organized labor pulled off a dramatic upset by defeating Proposition 226, which would have forced unions to get annual approval from each member to spend any dues money on politics. Voters from union households turned out in force (about 35 percent of those voting) to cast ballots overwhelmingly against Proposition 226 (by a 71 to 29 percent margin), even though polls taken a few months before the election showed both union members and the general public strongly favoring it.

Labor's power to mobilize members around core economic issues may prove especially important in this election, when there are widespread expectations of low turnout and when many voters—and candidates—may be distracted or disgusted by Monica madness. Indeed, in early October labor political strategists met to fine-tune their message. Without

making apologies for Clinton's behavior, they planned to attack Republicans for using the investigation of the president as a way of diverting voters' attention from real issues.

Organized labor's money is still important to politics, but its distinctive potential lies in turning its members into political organizers. "It's the new revolution in American politics," says California Federation of Labor President Art Pulaski. "We're bringing it away from the impersonalization of TV and to the individual and family. You can't beat us when we do it this way."

## Who's there?

**E**ven with its new strategies and energy, labor's political action runs up against serious limits. Labor's endorsed candidates lost in many key primary races, such as the Democratic nomination for governor in Michigan. And where labor prevailed in Illinois with its man Poshard, it now finds itself isolated from many of its liberal allies because of the candidate's conservative views on abortion, gun control, gay rights and even the environment. Poshard seems likely to lose to Secretary of State George Ryan, a conservative Republican who—despite his record—has appealed to Democratic social liberals. Despite labor's strong tilt toward the Democrats, some unions support Republicans who are seen as likely winners in order to gain influence: The Illinois Education Association, for example, endorsed Ryan, even though he supports tax credits for private school tuition that the union has fought. Other labor leaders are conservative or have crafted their own deals with Republicans. For example, the labor advisor to Ryan—who is also an ally of Teamster presidential candidate James Hoffa—blocked a general Teamster endorsement of Poshard.

More critically, even if labor turns out its members in disproportionate numbers, its base has shrunk drastically from its heyday, and that inherently limits what even the best efforts can achieve. AFSCME organizing director Paul Booth warns that the next few years may prove extremely critical for labor on both the political and organizing fronts. He argues that if labor doesn't win sufficiently strong control of Congress and the presidency in the next few years then union influence and membership may slip to a level that will make it difficult for the union movement to change labor law and make organizing a less Herculean task.

But there is hope. Some unions are striking out in bolder directions, trying to define a labor political agenda in ways that are less dependent on politicians in either party and



more oriented toward issues that appeal to working-class families. For example, at the Local 705 meeting, Jerry Zero, the union's principal officer and a leading Teamster reformer, distributed books on labor history and "corporate power and the American dream" to his stewards. He also urged them to join the Labor Party, which is holding its second convention in November in Pittsburgh.

In New York, the Communications Workers, Auto Workers and a few other unions have helped launch the Working Families Party, which offers a pro-labor means of casting a ballot for progressive Democrats. In Washington state, organized labor has seized the initiative, putting a measure on the ballot to raise the state minimum wage and then index it to keep up with inflation. And unions across the country are recruiting more members to run for office. In Nevada, for example, the Culinary Workers Union successfully ran one of its members against an incumbent state senator who had been unhelpful to unions.

Unions have also been trying to reshape political debate. In selected congressional districts, the AFL-CIO has been running issue ads on HMO reform, protecting Social Security, opposing Republican tax cuts and stopping fast track. Most, but not all, are aimed at Republicans who are politically vulnerable. According to pollster Guy Molyneux, the priorities of most voters match much of the progressive agenda: HMO reform, saving Social Security, and improving education. But this year, unlike 1996, the Democrats have not been able to sharply distinguish themselves from Republicans, who have tried to moderate their image by offering weak HMO legislation, for example.

Unions are also trying to coordinate their efforts. In California, Pulaski says, the state labor federation provides "artillery or air support for the ground troops," with initial mailings and phone banking (by both volunteers and paid staff) and production of basic literature. Local labor councils and unions coordinate volunteer efforts, linking workplace education to neighborhood visits—concentrating members' activity on the tasks where personal contact is most valuable, such as persuading or motivating the undecided or marginal voters.

In Western Illinois, labor unions long have supported Rep. Lane Evans, a rock-solid progressive in a swing district, by taking the campaign into worksites and members' homes. These grass-roots political efforts evolved into Solidarity Committees—with volunteers tripling in the past few years to more than 300 union members—that help each other in contract fights and in getting pro-labor candidates elected to city councils and county boards.

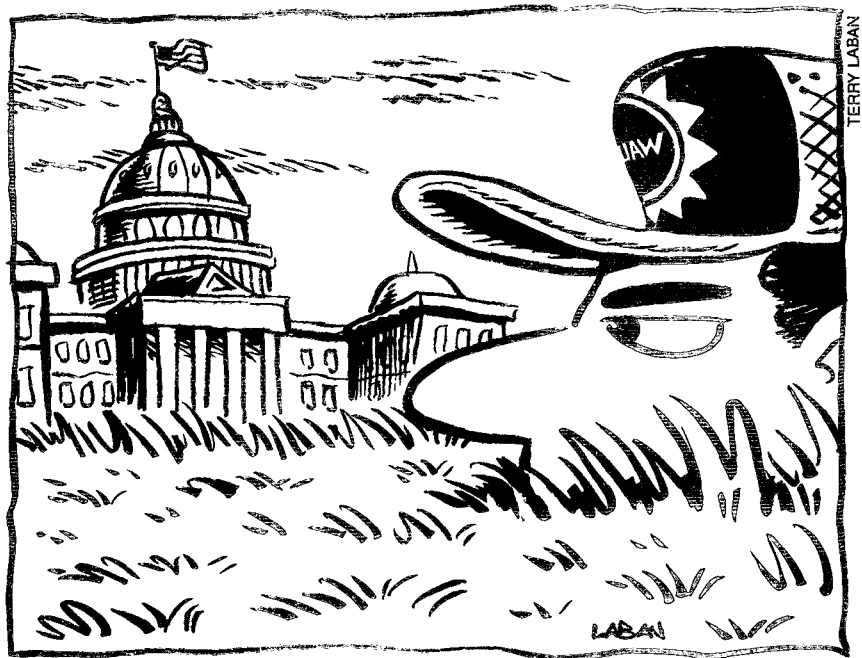
In Ohio last year, unions mobilized members for an extraordinary victory in overturning Proposition 2, a disastrous workers compensation law that had been passed by the state legislature. "For the first time in six decades, a law that was

passed and signed by the governor was stopped by the voters," says John Ryan, executive secretary of the Cleveland Federation of Labor. "We stopped \$200 million a year from going from injured workers to corporate profits. Second, we showed that even in an age of television, Ohio voters were willing to choose grass-roots work and education on the job over 30-second TV commercials. The third thing we did is that we energized the labor movement."

Labor has been able to keep up much of the momentum from that campaign, winning more local races this year. "We have more action going into this next election six weeks out than we had on Proposition 2 two weeks out," Ryan says. "We're gaining additional union strength as we move on." In the Cleveland area, labor has developed a network of 1,400 volunteers and set up regional networks of activists to knock on doors in working class areas, targeting all Democrats and independents, not only union members.

Union leaders who have pushed the new grass-roots strategies recognize that they are not just influencing elections; they are rebuilding a labor movement that had lost not only its numbers but its vigor. The success thus far raises hopes that labor may—depending on the swings of the economy and the fall-out from the Lewinsky scandal—regain enough political strength from the grass-roots mobilization of its existing base to save its own skin and, in the short term, the future of progressive politics. In Wisconsin, for example, the likely capture of two

# Labor!



Republican congressional seats by liberal Democrats this year "would not have happened without a revitalized labor movement," says state labor federation President David Newby. "This links to the whole future of labor as a movement, not just a group paying dues like an insurance policy," he says. "It requires organization and involvement of the members themselves. It's getting back to union activity of the '30s and '40s. It's getting back to our roots." ■

# ... and Don Knotts as God

By Pat Aufderheide

If you were to pick a God for the kind of universe inhabited by Ozzie and Harriet and Beaver Cleaver, you could do worse than Don Knotts, once Andy Griffith's fuss-budgety sidekick. In *Pleasantville*, which just debuted at the Toronto International Film Festival, he plays the Almighty as a querulous TV repairman who decides to fix the lives of a couple of sorry suburban kids.

Twins David (Tobey Maguire) and Jennifer (Reese Witherspoon) are two charmless specimens of white, middle-class adolescence in the '90s. He's a dreamy nerd who lives only for '50s TV reruns, and she's a gum-chewing bimbo. They look downright adult compared to their custody-caviling parents, though. One evening, Knotts whooshes them into the "kinder, gentler" and entirely black-and-



RALPH NELSON/NEW LINE

Bringing color to *Pleasantville*.

scene that pays visual homage to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. But despite the resistance of the town elders, there's no going back to black and white.

## Pleasantville

Directed by Gary Ross

white sitcom world of *Pleasantville*, where Father (William H. Macy) always knows best and Mom (Joan Allen) always has his meat loaf ready.

Willy-nilly, David and Jennifer become agents of change, introducing passions of the human life cycle—and, inevitably, conflict and difference as well. As the sitcom characters' feelings and impulses awaken, they gradually take on color, moving from tints and pastels and muted tones to brilliant, full palettes.

(This transformation, by the way, made the film a pioneering effort technically. Over several years, engineers digitized much of the film and executed 1,700 digital visual effects shots. In fact, a technician to whom the film is dedicated died in a car accident, driving home after yet another day of overtime. The incident precipitated a controversy over industry working conditions.)

The town fathers, led by the mayor (the late J.T. Walsh), become outraged, segregating the town into black-and-whites and "coloreds." Efforts to control the contagion lead to book burnings, Klan-style men's meetings and a trial

First-time director Gary Ross long ago staked out a spot at ground zero of liberal Hollywood. After scripting the winsome 1988 comedy *Big*, he wrote the 1993 tale of a liberal double for a Reaganesque president, *Dave*. He won Academy Award nominations for both. Along the way, he wrote speeches for Michael Dukakis and Bill Clinton. He began working on *Pleasantville*, he claims, the day after the 1994 election that put Republicans back in charge of the House of Representatives.

"Bob Dole wanted to build a bridge to the past," he told the *Los Angeles Times*, "and many people are in love with a past I don't think ever existed—one that was devoid of conflict or poverty or strife."

Ross, whose father Arthur was a blacklisted scriptwriter, is not charmed by romantic, late-night cable images of consensus. *Pleasantville*, then, is not about '50s conformity or even about '50s television, but about '90s nostalgia for an imaginary past, whether it's brought to you by Nick at Nite or Bill Bennett. It's about how we can't retreat from the challenge of living into a timeless, conflict-free safety zone. We need instead to construct a present that our

young people would like to grow up in.

Feelings—sexual energy, anger, love—are the film's easy indicator of human life. That's where the movie can become irritatingly simplistic, even for broad-brush satire. Self-expression, after all, is far from an unalloyed good. Ordinary civility depends greatly, in daily life, on our not sharing our feelings with each other. Furthermore, people with many unpredictable differences need political

structures, not emotional honesty, in order to live together. Ross says that he wants people to understand that fear of difference is what leads to oppression. But fear of difference is typically one aspect of a larger social struggle over resources. It's an important symptom, but it's not the disease.

Still, this is a relentlessly likeable film, from Tobey Maguire's shy grin and Randy Newman's low-key score to the sprinkling of film-buff references that range from *Fahrenheit 451* to *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. But there have been far bolder satirical looks at the small-town fantasies that immigrant film-maker Frank Capra was so good at spinning for American audiences, including David Lynch's unparalleled *Blue Velvet*.

Gary Ross is way too tenderhearted for something like that. He doesn't want to blow up *Pleasantville*; he just wants to show why lost teens like David might find that fantasy so fascinating, and to give them pause—and a smidgen of hope.

Last summer's *The Truman Show*, directed by Peter Weir, portrayed a television series in which everyone was acting except the central character, Truman (Jim Carrey), an unwitting vendor of his own innocence. It was a claustrophobically compelling fantasy, which appealed to a paranoid streak in our culture. Another current movie about our TV obsession, scheduled for winter release, is director Ron Howard's



*edTV*, about a hapless slacker whose family is torn apart when they become the focus of an ongoing documentary TV program. (This of course actually happened to the Loud family in *An American Family*, the '70s public TV documentary series.) In *edTV*, personal crisis makes great ratings, as we cynics among the clickers and zappers already know. *Pleasantville*, by contrast, runs from cynicism. The TV characters come to believe that they're real, and that life, however risky and complicated, is worth living in the present and for the future.

**P**leasantville, which opens in wide release shortly, was one of the hits of the Toronto International Film Festival. Once a best-of-the-year's-movies event for Canadian film lovers, the festival has burgeoned into a must-attend site for new cinema. This September, thousands of industry people jammed business-only screenings to sample more than 300 films from places as far flung as Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Congo and the Amazon basin, and from figures of international art cinema such as Theo Angelopoulos, Mohsen Makhmalbaf and Shohei Imamura.

Ross' film was received in this environment as a sign of the shrinking distance between U.S. mainstream producers and independents, and even of the maturing

of independent cinema. Some of *Pleasantville*'s signs of independence, for viewers who might have mistaken it for a Hollywood film: Celebrity indie filmmaker Steven Soderbergh, who rose to fame with *sex, lies and videotape*, produced it; distributor New Line, although

owned by Time Warner, specializes in slightly offbeat material; and that, however mild-mannered, *Pleasantville* does have something to say.

In that sense, this sweetly conceived movie marks the current boundaries of U.S. mainstream film-making. ■

## An Activist's Life

By Erik Marcus

**W**henever I travel around the country, I typically read the local alternative weeklies. Usually these weeklies are politically to the left, consistently defending the rights of women, the poor, homosexuals and minorities. I page through these weeklies, where the guiding philosophy is one of tolerance and freedom, and usually end up finding a section of restaurant reviews. Almost without exception, the reviews describe meat-centered dishes. I often wonder what would happen if left-leaning reporters and publishers did some thinking about the nine billion animals each year that end up on America's dinner plates.

As an example of where thinking about animals can lead, consider the late Henry Spira. Until he was 45, Henry spent a lifetime fighting for a

variety of liberal causes. He was a union activist, a vocal critic of the FBI and for years an active member of the Socialist Workers Party. His efforts to quell violence and fight racism sometimes put

### Ethics into Action: Henry Spira and the Animal Rights Movement

By Peter Singer  
Rowman & Littlefield  
222 pages, \$22.95

him in great personal danger. On one occasion, thugs warned Spira that he would end up found floating in the Panama Canal if he continued trying to expose union corruption. The government followed Spira's every step for decades. While working in the Merchant Marine, Henry was closely monitored by the Naval Investigative Service, and J. Edgar Hoover appears to have personally annotated his FBI file.

**I**n 1973 somebody gave Spira a cat. A few months later he came upon an essay, "Animal Liberation" (later expanded to a book of the same title) by Peter

*Al pasado no regresaremos jamás* ("We'll never return to the past"), oil on linen, by Pedro Álvarez. Álvarez's work, along with that of 19 other Cuban artists, is showing at the Arizona State University Art Museum until December 13. The exhibition, *Contemporary Art from Cuba: Irony and Survival on the Utopian Island*, will later begin touring nationwide.



Singer, who would later become a philosophy professor at Princeton. The cat and the essay combined to reshape the way Spira perceived animals. "I became increasingly uncomfortable," he said, "petting one animal while I was sticking a knife and fork into another."

While Spira is now well known in animal rights circles, he's not well known to casual vegetarians and progressive activists. That should change with the publication of *Ethics into Action: Henry Spira and the Animal Rights Movement*. Written by Singer, whose essay inspired Spira to take up the animal rights cause in the first place, *Ethics into Action* is a remarkable portrait of Henry's personal and political life.

In the mid-'70s, Spira learned from Singer that every year millions of animals were experimented on in laboratories, and often the results were absolutely useless to people. Yet despite a 100-year history, the U.S. anti-vivisection movement had never managed to stop a single laboratory experiment.

By halting just one series of animal experiments, Spira thought he could establish precedent for future victories. He discovered that, just a few blocks from his Manhattan apartment, the American Museum of Natural History was providing the facilities for a grotesque set of experiments on cats. In these experiments, the cats had their brains surgically damaged by researchers, who then observed them for changes in sexual behavior.

Spira knew that if the cat experiments were publicized, the museum would likely lose attendance and supporters. So he quietly approached museum officials, promising that no demonstrations against the museum would occur if the experiments were halted.

The museum ignored his proposal. The experiments continued and Spira went on the attack. He organized an escalating public awareness campaign that, within a matter of months, delivered a crushing blow to the museum's prestige. Articles on the experiments began appearing in local and national publications, including *Newsweek*. Every weekend, Spira assembled large protests outside the museum's gates. In one five-week period, 350 people canceled their memberships.

Losing prestige, the museum realized it must abandon the cat experiments. The procedures were halted and the scientist who ran the experiments was denied future funding. In all, the museum campaign saved just a few dozen cats. But Spira had set precedent and was ready to move on to bigger targets.

**S**pira decided to go after Revlon, the world's biggest cosmetics company. Like almost all other cosmetics companies of the time, Revlon was harming thousands of rabbits a year to test cosmetics.

As with the museum campaign, Spira first approached Revlon with the promise that if the company agreed to explore alternatives, there would be no need for it to endure a negative publicity campaign. When Revlon stonewalled, Spira began running full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* asking, "How Many Rabbits Does Revlon Blind For Beauty's Sake?"

Faced with negative media publicity and ongoing demonstrations outside its headquarters, Revlon quickly agreed to put \$750,000 into a development effort for alternatives to animal testing. Months later, Spira convinced Avon to match Revlon's \$750,000 commitment, and with that the trend was established. Companies throughout the industry rapidly joined the effort to develop alternatives. As a consequence, throughout the '80s and '90s, cosmetics companies around the world have, one by one, announced policies banning animal testing.

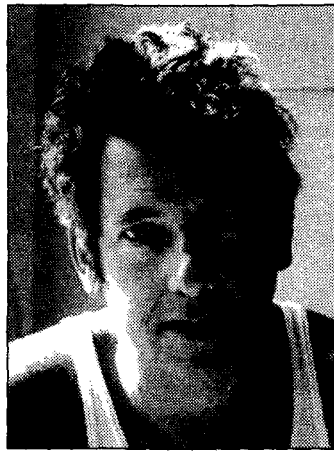
More recently, Spira was able to get the USDA to retract a proposal that required all cattle imported from Mexico to be face-branded. The USDA initially wouldn't budge, so Spira ran full-page ads showing a calf wincing while being branded on the face. The advertisements provoked public outrage, and the USDA received more than 12,000 letters and e-mails. Not only did the USDA withdraw its proposal, it abolished its face-branding requirement altogether.

**W**hat made Spira's campaigns so successful? Primarily, it was his willingness to spend months planning each campaign. He also chose his targets with great care. Every campaign, from the cat experiments to face branding, exposed cruelty that his opposition couldn't dare defend in public debate.

In part, it was Spira's reputation that made him so effective, not just with animal rights activists but with the press and his opposition as well. He was

always obsessive about ensuring the accuracy of whatever information he publicized. Media people knew that they could trust Henry, so they were more likely to cover his campaigns.

But more than anything else, his success came from a willingness to put aside personal differences. No matter how tough the fight, he never allowed things to get personal. He refused to see the world as divided up into saints and sinners. He realized that dialog can lead to constructive change, while finger-pointing merely hardens the opposition.



Henry Spira

**H**enry Spira recently died, just weeks after the publication of *Ethics into Action*. He had been battling cancer for more than two years, and passed away two evenings prior to a large gathering that was scheduled to honor him. The gathering went on as scheduled, with many of his friends sharing their memories.

He was a friend of mine who provided encouragement and support for my own book, *Vegan*. When I first met Henry in 1991, he gave me his characteristic simple advice: "Try to find something you know you can fix, and then don't quit until you're done. You're not going to eliminate all animal cruelty overnight. Take on projects that are achievable and doable."

I'm glad that Henry lived long enough to see the publication of his biography, a superb "how-to" guide on activism—animal rights or otherwise. ■

**Erik Marcus** contributes to *Salon* and is the author of *Vegan: The New Ethics of Eating*.



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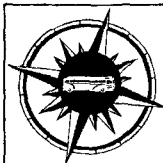
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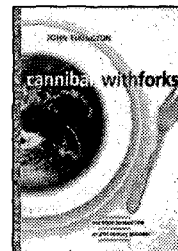


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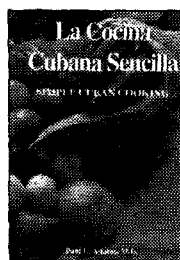
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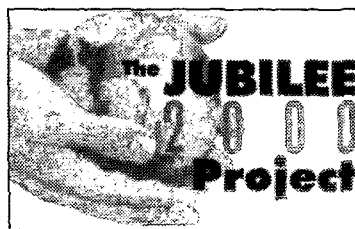
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"Facing the November Elections," editorial;

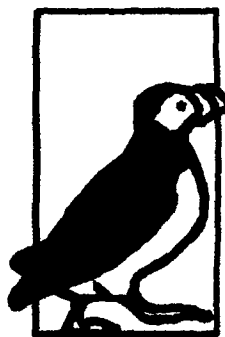
"Community Development: Reproducing the 'Jewish Success Story,'" Lawrence Bush; "English Jews and the English Left," review by David Weinberg; "Black-listed, He Fought Back," review by Deborah Elkin.

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*Continued from page 30*

I first discovered The Deuce as a preteen. Artie—a buddy from the Bronx—and I played hooky there, slumming around in search of some genuine diversion.

In those days West Forty-second was an all-sideshow concrete circus. Tourists and natives alike flocked there to get a gander at the macabre wonders procured for our amusement by cigar-chomping, wrinkled-suited, sidewalk impresarios. It was the very seediness of these hard-edged yeggs that led us to imagine how supremely visceral would be the fruits of their efforts. When they prevailed upon us passersby not to be shy, but to “step right up” for “only a thin dime,” most agreed—Artie and myself included—that for an honest look at the oddities they so vehemently shilled, ten cents was indeed a bargain.

Artie and I ducked into one gritty shock parlor after another that afternoon, finding gratification for our adolescent fascinations in about half of them. We felt cheated when we finally peered through the little “porthole” in the belly of Hubert’s Museum to discover—after an interminable wait on line—that “the world’s tiniest living mermaid” was in fact a normal-sized woman done up in mermaid drag and reduced to inches by some obvious trick of mirrors.

A few doors down from there was a freak show under the Ripley’s Believe It or Not banner. There we saw the bogus *Perrified Giant* and the all-too-real two-headed calf. The sight of that tiny mute, doelike creature lying before the gawking crowd on a bed of old mottled straw has stayed with me all these years. A second, dead head had been grafted crudely onto the side of its little neck, all for our perverse entertainment. And—flippant youth though I was—standing there gazing into that calf’s pained little bovine eyes, I couldn’t help but feel obscene and diabolical.

Making our way down the block, Artie and I were the targets of every front-door barker. But the most passionate voice, out of this din, came from a stalwart soul, near Eighth Avenue, literally standing on a soapbox and stumping for Jesus. The presence of this man, and the thought that God’s emissary would stalk the unrepentant into such a smoldering pit as The Deuce, put me in touch with fears far worse than any horror chambers into which Artie and I were unquietly venturing.

Years later, on the threshold of adulthood, I returned to The Deuce to find that its attractions had been reduced by one dimension. Gone were the grim dungeons I remembered. And in their place were more than a dozen shimmering, winking movie marquees stretching down the block. I whiled away countless hours munching popcorn in front of those giant, flickering screens, swept up in the gruesome devices of shock cinema. Some days I would race from one theater, as soon as the lights came up, right into another, from horror movie to splatter flick to blaxploitation film.

Afterward I would find the subway in the gathering dusk, hobgoblins and serial killers lurking in the shadows of my mind. If it was Saturday evening, I would hurry past Rosie the

midget preacher, who held court by the parking lot, wailing into the night about the wages of sin. In the midst of all the divertissements along The Deuce, this little sawed-off woman was a draw. She always had them standing four or five deep. Down the subway stairs I would hasten, Rosie’s fire burning my ears, knowing the train would not take me far enough.

Over time the screens on The Deuce got smaller as the all-night movie houses were one by one replaced with glittering triple-X fantasy palaces, each one a maze of one-man theaters so small, there was hardly room enough for shame.

Compared to the previous attractions on the block, porno held no particular appeal for me. But one day I ducked into one of the booths for a quick blast on my stem. And the instant that cocaine rush went quivering through my brain, I became mesmerized by the sexual antics shimmering across the little screen. Flicking through the endless channels, feeding more quarters into the slot, compulsively smoking and reloading my pipe, and feeling paranoid about opening the door, I found myself stuck inside the booth for what seemed like hours, until everything but my lust had been consumed. I emerged from this lunacy and scurried down The Deuce feeling as transparent as Saran Wrap, convinced, in my buzzed-out brain, that all the people I passed on the street were clucking their tongues at me.

It seemed fitting, then, that even God’s corner seemed to be aflame with anger, and that the acerbic Black Israelites holding forth there had come not necessarily to assure our place among the chosen but to proclaim the certainty of theirs.

Perhaps it’s equally appropriate now that a more calculated brand of redemption has come to Times Square—now that most of the sex shops have been

shuttered, and the novelty stores have been nailed shut, and The Deuce seems bound toward more homogenized pleasures—that God’s corner should now play host to bespectacled, new-age moonies, Magic Marker in hand, quietly diagramming the Lord’s purpose, on a portable flip chart.

And I, too, have stopped groping for the dark and outré, reaching for the light of spirit instead of the glow of the pipe. And when I dawdle along The Deuce these days, even as I wonder at the scale of the new, gaily stuttering lights of its superstores and megastores, the absence of any spirit at all in this, the heart of our great city, cuts me to the quick. Without souls at risk, The Deuce seems to have nothing left at stake but venture capital. It appears that even God himself has abandoned his corner and made off for some other dark region of this city where, good, bad, lost, found, or in-between, beat the raw, true hearts of men. ■

Lee Stringer is the author of *Grand Central Winter* (Seven Stories Press), from which this was adapted. Homeless and addicted to crack from the early '80s until the mid-'90s, he launched a writing career as a columnist and editor for *Street News* in New York City. He has since written for *The Nation*, the *New York Times* and *Newsday*. He lives in Mamaroneck, N.Y.

**Tourists and natives alike  
flocked there to get a gander  
at the macabre wonders  
procured for our amusement.**



BRIAN RALPH

# God's Corner

By Lee Stringer

If, at the time of this writing, you should venture to Times Square and wander down the south side of Forty-second Street toward where it intersects with Eighth Avenue, you'll get a parting glimpse at a New York tradition.

I call it God's corner.

That little patch of pavement—on the pedestrian side of the chain-link fence encasing the corner parking lot—where Billy Sundays have been plying the Lord's word since as far back as I can remember.

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